

1 – 39 (canceled)

40. (currently amended) The method as described in claim [37] 46 wherein the given function is based on one or more factors selected from a set of factors including: a number of contact center agents expected to be available to service the contacts during the given set of identified number of time periods, an amount of time that a contact center agent may allocate to service contacts, an amount of excess capacity that a contact center agent has available, a backlog goal, an average handling time, and agent schedule adherence.

41. (currently amended) The method as described in claim [37] 46 further including the step of:

[generating] (f) using the second forecast to generate a staffing requirement for the given future time period.

42. (canceled)

43. (canceled)

44. (currently amended) The method as described in claim [43] 46 further including the step of:

(f) generating a staffing requirement for the given future time period as a function of the aggregate contact load that has been [distributed] allocated into that given future time period.

45. (currently amended) The method as described in claim [43] 46 further including the step of:

(f) generating a staffing requirement for the given future time period as reflected in the second forecast as a function of the aggregate contact load that has been [distributed] allocated into that given future time period and an agent average handling time that has been forecast for that given future time period.

46. (currently amended) A method, for use in a contact center environment expected to receive contacts that are not required to be serviced by contact center agents in [real-time] real time, wherein the contact center environment has associated therewith a first forecast, the first forecast being a forecast of contact load expected to [occur] be

received in each of a set of future time periods within a given future time range, comprising:

- (a) identifying a given service level goal for a given future time period within the given future time range of the first forecast, the service level goal describing a maximum amount of time that may occur between receipt of a given contact and handling of the given contact, wherein the given contact comprises a part of the contact load expected to occur during the given future time period;
 - (b) for the given future time period of the first forecast, using the given service level goal identified for that given future time period to identify a number of time periods over which the contact load in that given future time period may be [distributed] allocated;
 - (c) for the given future time period of the first forecast, applying a given function to the contact load to [distribute] allocate the contact load for the given future time period over a given set of the identified number of time periods;
 - (d) repeating steps (a)-(c) on an iterative basis for additional given future time periods within the given future time range to [distribute] allocate the contact load for each additional given future time period; and
 - (e) with respect to a given future time period, aggregating the contact load that has been [distributed] allocated into that given future time period as a result of applying, on an iterative basis, [the given function in] steps (a)-(c) to generate a second forecast, the second forecast being a forecast of contact load expected to be handled in each of the set of future time periods within the given future time range, and wherein the second forecast differs from the first forecast in an amount of contact load in at least one future time period; and
- wherein one or more of steps (a) – (e) are performed by one or more electronic processing devices.

47. (canceled)

48. (previously submitted) The method as described in claim 46 wherein the contacts that are not required to be serviced by contact center agents in [real-time] real time include contacts selected from a set of contacts that include: electronic communications and written communications.

49. (previously submitted) The method as described in claim 48 wherein the electronic communications include at least one email.

50. (previously submitted) The method as described in claim 48 wherein the electronic communications include at least one fax.

51. (currently amended) Apparatus, for use in a contact center environment expected to receive contacts that are not required to be serviced by contact center agents in [real-time] real time, wherein the contact center environment has associated therewith a database that includes a first forecast, the first forecast being a forecast of contact load expected to [occur] be received in each of a set of future time periods within a given future time range, comprising:

code executable on a processor to identify a given service level goal for a given future time period within the given future time range of the first forecast, the service level goal describing a maximum amount of time that may occur between receipt of a given contact and handling of the given contact, wherein the given contact comprises a part of the contact load expected to occur during the given future time period;

code executable on a processor that, for each given future time period of the first forecast, uses the given service level goal identified for that given future time period to identify a number of time periods over which the contact load in that given future time period may be [distributed] allocated;

code executable on a processor that, for each given future time period of the first forecast, applies a given function to the contact load to [distribute] allocate the contact load for the given future time period over a given set of the identified number of time periods; and

code executable on a processor that, with respect to each given future time period, aggregates the contact load that has been [distributed] allocated into that given future time period to generate a second forecast, the second forecast being a forecast of contact load expected to be handled in each of the set of future time periods within the given future time range, and wherein the second forecast differs from the first forecast in an amount of contact load in at least one future time period[: and]